“A child who is generally confident and who has high self-esteem is more likely to ask questions, participate actively, express ideas, and take on new challenges.

Confident children are also better able to learn from mistakes, handle constructive criticism and to generally push themselves harder in learning.”
A confident child may be enthusiastic or assertive, but what we often don’t understand is where this confidence comes from. In the same way, a child who lacks confidence and is shy or quiet may just as easily be misunderstood.

heads up explores this issue of confidence for children in their final years of primary school. These children, aged between 10 and 12 years old, are developing their unique personalities, forming their own opinions and are able to take responsibility for their actions.

To understand the experiences of a child at this crucial age, and what it means to be confident, is to better create an environment that will nurture their self-esteem.

the objectives

heads up is an awareness campaign that aims to:

1) Visualise the meaning of confidence for children aged between 10 and 12 years old, exploring what confidence feel like, sound like and how can it be achieved?

2) Provide parents with information to reflect on their child’s level of confidence

3) Strengthen the communication and understanding between adult and child

4) Trial a research methodology designed to explore the childhood experiences of today’s youth

Disclaimer: This campaign has no intention to replace psychological theories and research or to argue for or against them. It aims to add a subjective dimension to a personal issue. All the children interviewed for research purposes will remain anonymous.

introducing
a child’s voice

heads up is based on an interactive and empowering research model that is a voice for these children to express their experiences, and gives their parents and teachers ears to hear it.

Twenty children, aged between 10 and 12 years old, of mixed gender and racial background, from Concord Public School, in Sydney’s Inner West, were interviewed in August 2005. They were asked to comment on the meaning of confidence through a series of questions.

The children were to:
- Define the term confidence
- Reflect on their own level of confidence
- Express, both verbally and visually, the emotions and circumstances attached to the feeling of confidence

The term confidence can be defined in three contexts.

1) TO BE COURAGEOUS; PRESUMPTUOUS. [to be bold]
2) MARKED BY FAITH IN ONESELF; SELF-ASSURED. [to feel secure]
3) MARKED BY ASSURANCE, AS OF SUCCESS. [to be competent]

The responses from the 20 children were analysed in relation to this framework.

The study uncovered the following...
confidence means

[but i actually feel confident when i am]
A child is most confident in an environment that makes them feel comfortable.

The study shows that children doing an activity that they have done before, being in a place that they have been before, and interacting with people they already know sets a foundation for confidence.

Such an environment helps children to remove their inhibitions. They are free to express themselves, their passions and strengths. On the other hand, not knowing what to do or learning something new can be disorientating and cause a child to be more cautious about their actions.

A comfortable environment facilitates two situations. The first is Expression; the freedom to communicate how they feel, do what they are good at, and be who they wish to be, without feeling like they are being judged. The second is Reliability; where they are able to look to others for encouragement and guidance in insecure situations.
Whether it is the feeling of winning, belonging to a team or simply for performance, playing sport is expressed as the biggest factor in building confidence in children aged between 10 and 12 years old.

said that playing sport boosts confidence.

Well there was one time when we were at a cricket match, playing for the school with other schools and it was my turn to bat and I hit a four.

50% of these children said that winning was most important.
Being with people that offer support, encouragement and recognition helps to build a child’s self-esteem. This is where they have the freedom to express their strengths and passions, but are also able to ask for help when they need it. "When I was at the presentation day becoming a prefect; my family was there, my friends were there. It made me feel really proud and happy."

said that the support of friends and family helped to build confidence.
In the final years of primary school, when a child is preparing for High School, education and the feeling of competence are vital to their growth and development. It is to succeed in a competitive environment that creates a sense of self-assurance.

said that **competence** at school boosts confidence.

55% of the children interviewed said **incompetence at school** makes them feel least confident.

"I am most confident when my teacher explains the work to me, ‘cause sometimes I don’t understand."
Public speaking is expressed as vital to the issue of confidence. The children that view public speaking, including debating, as a confidence boosting activity and as one of their strengths, enjoy being the centre of attention. They like to be heard and gain more confidence from the courage they have displayed. On the other hand, the children who see public speaking as a weakness, express that they dislike being the centre of attention. It is beyond their comfort zone.

Like once you start talking and everyone is listening and they like what you’re saying and then you feel more confident about what you’re doing.

71% OF THE CHILDREN INTERVIEWED SAID PUBLIC SPEAKING MAKES THEM FEEL LEAST CONFIDENT.
It is now time for you to ask your own child: “What does confidence mean to you?” Your child’s responses will help you to understand how to create an environment where they can express their passions and strengths, are able to rely on you for encouragement, and feel free to be who they want to be. Comfort will promote self-assurance in your child, help them to succeed in the things they love to do, and ultimately, push them to think big.

The following pages present a series of questions for you to discuss with your child, or ask them to complete in their own time and space. Allow this time to connect you with your child and their experiences.
What does the word confidence mean?

How often to feel confident?

- never
- rarely
- sometimes
- mostly
- always
Complete the following sentences.

I am most confident when...

[Blank lines]

I am least confident when...

[Blank lines]

Describe a specific situation that has made you feel confident.

[Blank lines]
In the space below, draw what it means to be confident and/or how it makes you feel.